

## Artist Statement

I see paintings as living things, as embodied beings. Paintings have skins, just like we do. They present their face to the world and have an interior life, just like we do. That is why making paintings is so compelling to me – they are the physical embodiment of our interior life and a form of communication between separate bodies and minds.

My paintings are imaginative, composite portraits of women in varying states of visibility, contrasting interiority and persona. I focus on creating presence, not likeness, playing with and against the conventions of the portrait genre in western art history. The figures look directly at the viewer or outside the frame, acknowledging the external world. I work to create an experience of presence and empathy between the viewer and the painting.

Colleen Kiely, 2021